

Our West Indian Island

(Copyright, 1899, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

SAN JUAN, Porto Rico, June 25, 1899.—Uncle Sam's West Indian garden patch! How shall I describe it? It is different from anything that has been published concerning it. It has more curious features than any part of the South American continent where I have been traveling for the past year, and a richer soil than almost any part of the world.

I came to Porto Rico on the government transport McPherson, and have already crossed the island from one side to the other, making many excursions through the interior. The island is a revelation to me. I have never seen a country in which nature has done so much to make a pleasant home for man.

Porto Rico is a combination of the beauties of the tropics and temperate zone. It is the new Switzerland of Uncle Sam's dominion. It lacks perhaps the grandeur of the Alps or the Rockies, but its quiet semi-tropical beauties more than make up for lack of snows and gigantic rocks. Sometimes in going over it I am reminded of Japan, and again I am carried back to the mountains of Corea or the hills of China. There are silver streams, with thatched huts clinging to the sides of the hills, down which they run; there are regions which equal the Blue Ridge mountains in their soft, hazy beauty, and other parts in which were it not for the bananas, the coconut palms, the bread fruit trees and other tropical wonders you might imagine yourself at home in some of the most beautiful of our rolling lands.

A Kite Tail View of Porto Rico.

Before I describe my tour of the island let me give you a birdseye view of it. Suppose we could attach ourselves for the purpose to the tail of one of our weather bureau kites, which, I believe, mount higher than any other kites made by man, and fly over it. We should see a great rectangular body of blue land rising, as it were, out of some of the quietest waters of the globe.

Porto Rico is about 1,400 miles from New York, on the boundary between the Atlantic ocean and the Caribbean sea.

It lies between the islands of Santo Domingo and St. Thomas. It is so near the latter island that you can steam there in about six hours, and so far east of Cuba that it takes our best transports two days to go from Ponce, on the south, to the city of Santiago.

Porto Rico, as we see it from our kite, is a mass of rolling hills. With the exception of a light green fringe bordering the coast it is all hills and valleys. And such hills and such valleys. The hills slope up in places like walls, and the valleys are gigantic capital "V's," with mountain streams dashing through them. Everything is covered with green, the dark shades of the mountains largely composed of coffee, tobacco and bananas, while the sickly green of the coastal plains comes from the sugar plantations.

In looking at the island you see that the hills rise higher in the center. It is divided by a mountain chain, which runs through it from west to east, branching out near the end in two spurs. This ridge looks just like a pitchfork, with two great tines and a long handle. The joint of the fork is about sixty miles from the western end of the island, and each of the tines is about forty miles long. Not far from where they join, one green mountain rises high above the others. This is El Yunque, or the "Anvil," the highest point in Porto Rico. It is 3,600 feet above the level of the ocean and you can see it far out in the Atlantic and in the Caribbean.

Where the Atlantic is Deepest.

It is the top of the mountain chain which, rising out of the sea, forms the Antilles. These islands are, in fact, merely the peaks of a great mountain range which extends far down into the bed of the ocean. If the water could be taken away or walled off you would here have some of the highest mountains of the globe. The deepest part of the Atlantic is just north of Porto Rico. In coming to San Juan I sailed over Brownson's deep, the bottom of which is five miles under water. It was at the point in the ocean plain where the land rises and finally culminates in El Yunque. If you could shut the sea off from this point the top of Porto Rico would be higher than any mountain in the Andes or the Rockies. It would be higher than anything in the world outside the very highest of the Himalayas. The same mountain chain springs up out of the water in Cuba to a distance of 8,000 feet above the sea, and in Santo Domingo, where it is the tallest, to 11,000 feet. It rapidly falls toward the east, and in St. Thomas it rises only half as high as Porto Rico above the water.

A Mole on the Face of Texas.

I have called Porto Rico a garden patch. It is little more than that in size, compared with the United States. It is so small it would hardly be a mole on the face of Texas. It would take just about 1,000 Porto Ricans if they could be sliced off and patched together to make a crazy quilt covering the United States. It is only three times as big as Rhode Island, about half as big as New Jersey and little less than half the size of Massachusetts. You could put ten Porto Ricans into Indiana, and if you cut it up into squares it would only be sixty times the size of the District of Columbia. Its average width is about as great as from Washington to Baltimore, and its length is not much greater than from Baltimore to Philadelphia. Were it level you could walk from one end of it to the other in three days and across it in one. On a bicycle you

could travel over it in a few hours from coast to coast.

The People Swarm.

Notwithstanding its smallness, however, it is more thickly populated than any of our states except Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It has 814,000 people, or 223 to the square mile. A square mile is 640 acres. It is just a section of land. On every section of Porto Rico there are 223 people, and on every quarter section, or 160-acre farm, there are five on the average about fifty-four souls.

This is so notwithstanding the island has almost no manufactures. The people all live off the soil, and hence their condition cannot be compared with that of the people of our thickly settled manufacturing states, where there are so many large cities.

As it is Porto Rico has twice as many people to the square mile as the state of New York, twice as many as Pennsylvania and three times as many as Indiana or Illinois, six times as many as Missouri or Georgia and almost nine times as many as Louisiana. With such conditions it would



A PORTO RICAN VILLAGE.

seem a poor place for our farmers, who need at least a square mile to turn around in.

A Land of Few Cities.

I see it stated that there are 200,000 people living in the cities of Porto Rico. I don't believe it. The country has only three cities of any size, and all the towns are overestimated. San Juan has, it is said, 37,000 people, but if so half of these live in the suburbs. By the estimates of the health officers, who made a careful canvass, there are only 16,000 people living inside the walls, and this section constitutes the city proper. Mayaguez has perhaps 10,000 people and Ponce between 20,000 and 30,000.

The most of the so-called cities of Porto Rico would be considered little more than villages in the states. The land is divided up into municipalities, but each municipality contains not only the village by which it is governed, but all the people living for



COCOANUTS IN PORTO RICO.

miles around, so that a town of 500 or 1,000 is often put down as having from six to ten times that number. I find, in fact, the figures and statements put down in the books as to matters Porto Rican full of errors. They are made up from unreliable data, and the most of them come from Spanish books from fifty to 100 years old.

The Climate.

Take, for instance, the climate. About a generation ago some Spaniard wrote that Porto Rico was a country of catarrh, consumption and bronchitis. He stated that the hot, moist climate caused dysenteries and fevers and gave the land a bad name as to health. This statement has to a large extent been copied and has created a serious misimpression. Our army surgeons tell me that the contrary is the truth, and I find that

the Americans who have come to Porto Rico have, as a rule, improved in health.

Take myself. When I left Washington I was considerably troubled with the nasal catarrh, for which that city is famous. I brought with me an atomizer and other remedies. The moment I landed at San Juan my catarrh left me and I have not had a sign of it during my stay here. One of the captain quartermasters has had a similar experience and I have met a number of people who have been cured of catarrh and bronchitis since landing in Porto Rico.

Sanitarium for Nervous Diseases.

I was talking today with Mr. Harrison, the manager of the San Juan & Rio Piedras railroad, as to climatic conditions. Said he: "I think Porto Rico will eventually be a sanitarium for Americans who are broken down nervously. Take my own case. I was afflicted with nervous prostration when I was in Chicago. I could not sleep and could not work. I have improved every hour since I came to Porto Rico and I have been at my desk from 8 in the morning until 6 every day. I am doing what would naturally be wearing work. It is, you know, the organization of this railroad, but it does not seem to affect me. Everyone sleeps here."

"There is another thing about the climate," continued Mr. Harrison, "that should

within a few weeks was one of the great feats of modern surgery. A few months after Uncle Sam took possession it was found that smallpox had broken out and that only a few in every thousand of the population had been vaccinated. It was decided that all must be inoculated at once. Major Azel Ames, one of our army surgeons, was chosen to take charge of the work, and he has accomplished it in a way that will be one of the wonders of medical history.

In the first place, regulations were sent out providing that a man could not get work or do business of any kind without he was vaccinated, and that all the people must come to certain stations over the island and submit their arms to be scratched. The penalties were such that they came in hordes, and today I doubt if there are 100 unvaccinated men, women and children on the island.

The work was carried on largely by the native doctors, under the direction of our surgeons, and thousands were treated in a day. In cases where the first vaccination did not take, a second vaccination was required, and, all told, the vaccinations must have amounted to more than 1,000,000.

Vaccinating Cattle for Smallpox.

The supplying of the vaccine matter for this work was a serious undertaking. At first vaccine points by the thousands were imported from the United States. The long sea voyage destroyed the virus and Major Ames found that he would have to make his own vaccine matter here.

For this reason he tried to vaccinate the Porto Rican cattle, but the results at first were unsatisfactory. Our cattle when vaccinated develop blisters and sores just like those which appear on the arms of human beings when so inoculated. The matter which oozes out from these sores is put upon the points used for vaccination of human beings. The Porto Rican cattle when vaccinated formed hard round scabs without pus. At first Dr. Ames thought that the operation had been of no effect. By squeezing the scabs, however, he discovered that they produced drops of vaccine matter, and that from these he could make the points required.

The next thing was to establish a vaccine farm. He did this near Coamo Springs and in a few weeks had here the largest vaccine farm on record. He secured about 2,000 animals ranging from 8 months to 1 year old. The vaccination did not injure the cattle, and the big stock dealers of the island furnished them for nothing on the simple condition that they were to be returned in good order.

Each of the animals was first examined to see that it had tuberculosis or other diseases. Its temperature was taken again and again and it was given a place on the government record. When vaccinated it was numbered with a zinc tag and the number of vaccine points which were made from it were marked to correspond with this tag so that an exact record of every point could be had.

On Uncle Sam's Vaccine Farm.

During my stay at Coamo Springs I learned something of how the beasts were vaccinated. Each animal, after being tested and found free from disease, is brought up beside a folding table, the top of which stands perpendicularly against the side of the animal. The beast is now tied to the

table and by a twist the top is raised and laid horizontally on the legs of the table with the beast on top of it.

Now the doctors shave all the hair from a place as big as your two hands on one side of the belly, exposing the skin, which is as soft and tender as that of a child. This is scraped for a time with a sharp knife until the blood shows through the skin and upon the sore spot the vaccine matter is rubbed. The animal is then turned over and a spot upon its other side is vaccinated in the same way.

It is found that nearly all the animals take, and Dr. Ames tells me he has obtained as many as 2,000 points from a single beast. One of the queer things about the farm is the method of distinguishing the cattle vaccinated from day to day. Those which are treated one day have their horns painted red, those of the next day have their horns painted blue and those of the third day yellow. In this way the groups can be easily distinguished and the vaccine matter gathered at just the right time.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Friendship Insurance

That there may be such a thing as carrying insurance too far is indicated by the case of Mr. Mulcahy and Mr. Mulhooly, two Irish gentlemen, reports a London paper. Though they were known to be great friends, they were one day observed to pass each other in the street without a greeting.

"Why, Mulcahy," a friend asked, in astonishment, "have you and Mulhooly quarreled?"

"That we have not!" said Mr. Mulcahy, with earnestness.

"There seemed to be a coolness between you when you passed just now."

"That's the insurance of our fellowship."

"I don't understand."

"Whoy, thin, it's this way. Mulhooly and I are that devoted to wan another that we can't bear the idea of a quarrel, an' as we are both mighty quick tempered, we've resolved not to shpake to wan another at all!"

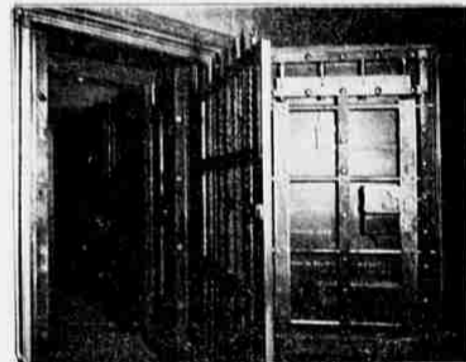


Photo by Rinehart.

Omaha Safe Deposit Vaults,

In Basement,
Omaha National Bank.

Absolute security for all valuables. Safes \$5 a year and upward. Trunks, chests, etc., received on storage at reasonable prices. Open from 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. The public invited to inspect the vaults.

THE BEST OFFICES

ARE IN THE BEE BUILDING



The Palace Office Building.

Only a few are vacant. Apply to R. C. PETERS & CO., Ground Floor.

Biggest Vaccination Job on Earth.

The vaccination of this enormous number